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United for Quality Care

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Teniesha Joyner, PCA
Stamford
District 1199 New England
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Tenisha Joyner, I live in Stamford, and I'm one of 10,000 Personal Care Attendants paid by state and federal Medicaid dollars. We care for people who have physical or intellectual disabilities and help them live with dignity at home. 80% of us are women, and nearly 70% of us are people of color. The vast majority of us make \$18.25, yet we do not have access to any paid sick time. Many of us have no health insurance. None of us have any retirement. For the past 7 months, my fiancé and I have been staying in hotels, spending money we don't have, or sometimes sleeping on the couches of friends or family. Sometimes we've had to settle for sleeping in my car. I've been working so hard to raise my credit score to get a new home, but I don't make a lot of money as a PCA so even trying to find an affordable apartment in Fairfield County isn't accessible. That's why I'm here advocating that PCA's like me receive the benefits we were promised by the state and desperately need and deserve.

I've cared for my grandmother for 15 years. When I saw my grandmother needed more help, despite working 2 jobs, I decided it was time for me to step up and help her. I quit my other jobs to care for her full-time. Caring for my grandmother means so much to me, but I have a lot of dreams for the future. As a PCA, I make on average \$18.25. I'm newly engaged, and my fiancé and I are dreaming of a wedding, a house and kids someday. I simply do not make enough to fund my future and don't have any security for this future I dream of. My wages are not keeping up with rental prices, and my fiancé and I can't afford monthly rent, let alone first and last months and a deposit.

Last year, the state promised us a stipend to apply towards the purchase of health insurance, but even that has not been delivered. Additionally we weren't told until three days before the deadline that we would have to apply for it. We were similarly promised sick time, but a year later the state has not delivered on that either. Paid time off or sick leave means we can take days to care for ourselves without the danger of falling behind on our bills.

We deserve the same security we bring to our consumers, and we're calling on you to set aside the funding needed for us to earn \$25/hour and have access to health insurance, retirement, and paid time off. We're just looking for the basics, but we need your support to get there. Thank you for your time.

